Business Gateway Initiative

Advisory Group Meeting

JANUARY 12, 2005

Meeting Facilitator:
- Justin Van Epps   SBA

Knowledge Agent:
- Jiyoung Chung   PMO

Meeting Participants:
Kate Donohue, DOL
Barbara Bingham, DOL
Katrina Masterson, DOJ
Jack Stoute, HHS
Steven Lott, DOT
Karen Hogan, DOC
Keith Thurston, GSA
Bruce Borzino, GSA
Nate Zuckerberg, GSA
Laura Fox, SBA
Dennis Byrne, SBA
Cameron Hogan, SBA
George DelPrete, SBA
Shiovani Desai, OMB
Tracy Beck, EPA
David Holyoke, SSA
Toby Henderson, DOE
Jim Edward, EPA
Stephanie Varvell, DOI
Gladys Myatt, Treasury
Constance Downs, EPA
David Holyoke, SSA
Karen Hogan, DOC

Meeting Location and Time:
2nd Floor, Eisenhower Conference room, Side A, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Meeting Notes:
- Justin Van Epps provided an introduction and reviewed the meeting agenda

Meeting Agenda:
- Project updates
- COMPASS project presentation
- Coal Vertical presentation

Project Updates:
Exhibit 300
- The Business Gateway Exhibit 300 has been updated to reflect the change in scope related to forms processing.

- The revised version is available upon request.

MOUs
- **Invitation to One-off Conversations**—FY 05 MOUs were sent on December 22nd; PMO has received feedback from member agencies and has met with member agencies to discuss questions and concerns. PMO welcomes these conversations; interested member agencies are encouraged to contact J. Van Epps directly to arrange a meeting.
- **Signing Timeframe**—OMB relayed the importance of member agencies in upholding the 45-day timeframe for signing MOUs; above-mentioned conversations may be ongoing, but member agencies should still adhere to the 45-day MOU signing timeframe.
- **PMO Contact**—Mardel Hall is the PMO's point person responsible for managing the MOU process; member agencies should send signed MOUs to her attention.

Planning Meetings
- **What and When**— The PMO hopes to have 4 or 5 agencies collaborate to provide direction to move key project areas forward and has scheduled meetings for this purpose; sign-up sheet for these meetings, to be held 1/26/05 and 1/27/05, were circulated.
- **Purpose**—This approach is intended to ensure a shared vision, ownership, and support across agencies.
- **Cost-Benefit Analysis**—A concern regarding the benefit of investment was raised, and it was suggested that fleshing out a cost-benefit analysis should be the main agenda item for these meetings. In response, the PMO responded that indeed, cost-benefit considerations will be a key item for meeting discussion, and the next AG meeting tentatively scheduled for Feb 2nd will also address this issue.
- **Meeting Time Conflicts**—Department of Energy stated that NARA will be holding meetings 25-28 and some representatives, who may wish to participate in the planning meetings may be unable to do so.
- **Meeting Agenda**—One member agency expressed concern regarding the inability to commit to attending these meetings until they had a clearer idea of their agenda. The PMO responded that agenda items are varied in their scope but that today's discussion would clarify that point. In addition, an agenda will be distributed via email to all AG members.

COMPASS Presentation and Next Steps:
Background and Tool Functionality
- **Cross-Agency Collaboration**--Given that the COMPASS Profiler team had limited resources, they have done a tremendous job, and the PMO would like to see increased resources and support for the tool moving forward. The COMPASS team, comprising representatives from EPA, DOL/OSHA, IRS, and DOE, is a model for cross-agency collaboration.

- ***Tool Functionality Overview***—Decision trees guide users through topics of interest, etc., to help users identify regulations/ forms with which they need to comply/ submit. An administrative database will allow agencies to edit and add questions.
- ***Syncing with other (Federal and State) Government Resources***—COMPASS identifies the appropriate NAICS code(s) when users select their industry then generates sector-specific guidance. The tool also provides access to state resources, allowing users to select states in which they operate.
- ***Future Functionality***—One goal for the tool is to have it 'talk' with the e-forms catalog, but this functionality is not working yet. They also have a vision for making a more robust key word search. The tool is also not tied to Regulations.gov/ rulemaking at this time.

Benefits of COMPASS to AG Member Agencies
- ***'Free' Customer Opinion Research***—Research findings during the COMPASS design and implementation process are applicable to agencies; information gleaned during usability testing by businesses (i.e., on what guidance they need) will provide information that will be useful to agencies.
- ***SBPRA Reporting***—The small business paperwork relief act of 2002 requires agencies to have online listing of their compliance assistance tools which must be updated frequently; COMPASS could replace the database that OMB maintains, for which it does annual data calls.
- ***One-stop Shop for Multiple Interpretations of Regulations***—Ideally, business will be able to access various agency interpretations of the same regulation from a single point of entry, which simplifies often confusing compliance issues for businesses.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps
The COMPASS team and AG agreed upon three main areas of tool development necessary prior to a pilot launch: content management, web site maintenance, and usability.
- ***Content Management***—The COMPASS team and AG recognized the importance of carefully designing content management processes to ensure tool effectiveness and sustainability, and two main themes emerged regarding this issue:
  - o ***Real-time Updates***—AG emphasized the importance of automatic updates to web content; that is to say, updates as they occur on the agency web sites should also appear simultaneously on the COMPASS site content.
  - o ***Agency Ownership for Content Management***—Also critical for effective content management is individual agency ownership for keeping information up to date (this could be accomplished using DOL's model whereby sub-agencies are responsible for managing their own content, which automatically updates the DOL web site).

- *Usability*—Given the lack of industry usability testing to date, it remains to be seen precisely what improvements are necessary to enhance usability. However, COMPASS team, PMO, and AG's predictions for necessary improvements prior to a pilot launch include the following:
  - o *Keyword Search Capability*—AG observed that the business community may find navigating through the drill-down questions confusing and cumbersome, that a better keyword search capability should be built out (which COMPASS team readily agreed is a critical improvement to make), and that a keyword search should even perhaps be the primary search method.
  - o *Usability Testing*—There was wide consensus around the idea that it is necessary to assess user-friendliness by pilot testing the tool with the business community.
  - o *Refined Content*—The COMPASS team will hone the information available through the web site to a narrower pool of resources relevant to small businesses, thus making the site less cumbersome and more manageable from a user standpoint.
- *Site Maintenance*—AG recommends that ownership of site maintenance should be designated, though no ideas or recommendations for where this responsibility should lie emerged during this discussion. Specifically, two areas require maintenance:
  - o *Diagnostic Questions*—Ensuring that questions remain relevant and accurate will require close monitoring, but no suggestions were made as to how this should occur/ who should own this process.
  - o *Link Maintenance*—One main concern is ensuring that links remain functional over time. One suggestion for facilitating this process is via link naming protocols, i.e., to ensure that updated versions of documents carry the same name.

COMPASS recommendations (Justin presented) (Q&A)
Discussion following the COMPASS presentation uncovered limited support for the tool and the following main areas for focus in preparation for a Go/No-Go decision on the tool during next month's Governance Board meeting:
- *Stronger Business Case*—AG recommends conducting a more rigorous business case analysis, including alternative ways to satisfy requirements and benefits of pursuing those routes—what other tools exist that provide better functionality that BGI could model its tool after?
- *Maintenance Requirements and Cost*—AG recommends outlining specific tool maintenance requirements and costs.
- *Government Liability*—Specify what federal government liability exists for having a tool like this (i.e., for information omissions). OMB maintained that liability will ultimately fall on business, since the information provided through COMPASS is intended to be a tool to help the business community rather than comprehensive guidance. AG recommendation: include a disclaimer. EPA includes a similar disclaimer on their tools, which has been vetted with their legal community.

- ***Business Industry Partner Identification***—Identify a business industry partner to help delineate requirements; SBA and Commerce would be a good place to start identifying potential partners.
- ***Highlight Business Focus Group Usage***—Emphasize during the presentation that the COMPASS team held business community focus groups to inform tool design.
- ***Risk Assessment***—AG expressed concern that COMPASS is heading down a path with which others have faced problems; the COMPASS team should speak to the developers of Benefits.gov—a tool with similar functionality—regarding their methodology, challenges, and lessons learned.

Coal Vertical Presentation and Next Steps:
After DOI presented the Coal Vertical tool, AG asked questions and made recommendations. Main concerns that would preclude a positive Go/ No-Go decision are as follows: e-authentication, benefits to AG member agencies and to BG mission, scalability/ replication of success, alternatives, and a clear purpose for the $275,000 investment.

- ***E-authentication Capability***—AG recommends that e-authentication should be pitched as a component of this project because it is a reusable piece. Vertical Coal is using Verisign and current federal authentication standards.
- ***Benefits to AG Member Agencies and to BG Mission: Direct v. Indirect Benefits***—What benefits do AG members receive in return for the 275,000 investment needed for Coal Vertical to be fully implemented, and why aren't home agencies paying for this themselves? To answer this question, the AG consensus is that BGI must make the case that Coal Vertical lays the groundwork for larger/ broader (cross-agency) impact. It was suggested that Coal Vertical should be used more as proof of concept than something BGI should invest additional dollars in, so a stronger case should be built around how investing in this project would benefit BGI as a whole and the individual member agencies.
- ***Direct Benefits***
  - ***Success Story to Gain Support/ Buy-in fro BGI from Business Community and Governance Board***—Albeit comprising a small government community, Coal Vertical is a good success story to advertise to gain BGI buy-in from other government communities; Coal Vertical helps build the case for and faith in BGI.
  - ***Groundwork for State-level Cooperation***—Building on the previous point, Coal Vertical has laid the groundwork for cooperation with state and local agencies. While only 7 states piloted the project, potentially 25 states would partner with the project to have access to the data should BGI fund project implementation. Early demonstrations of success such as that of Coal Vertical would help BGI liaise with state agencies for future cooperation.
- ***Indirect Benefits: Lessons Learned***—AG recommends that BGI emphasize indirect benefits in the form of lessons learned, while clarifying that other agencies will not necessarily be gaining direct benefits (i.e.,

scalable technology) by investing in the project. Valuable lessons learned can be gained from Coal Vertical's trial and error re: forms processing. To flesh further flesh out forms processing steps, it is necessary to move the project forward into implementation. When the data harmonization team meets the week of 1/24/05, they should augment and tighten discussion around benefits to BG member agencies.

- **Model to Replicate**—An architecture chart illustrating the nuts and bolts of the project would be useful in demonstrating how this project might apply to other agencies and in delineating discrete steps other agencies can follow.
- **Scalability/ Replication of Success**—Coal Vertical is a great first step in forms processing, but scalability is an issue. Is the project scalable, i.e., can it accommodate thousands of companies' requirements? Can BGI demonstrate a data harmonization form technology that is reusable? AG recommends that Coal Vertical be honest about what actual time and cost numbers are in order to manage expectations for future successes and a sober assessment of to what extent the project is replicable. To this point, questions including the following were asked:
  - o **How much data is shared across agencies?** *90%*
  - o **Have data standardizations problems arisen?** *Yes, but they were resolved.*
  - o **What software does Coal Vertical use?** *Probaris PS, which is a workflow tool.*
  - o **Who will fund ongoing costs?** *Shared cost model with partners, who've already agreed to include the funds in their e-budget. OSM's business case shows positive cost-benefit analysis over 5-yr period.*
- **Alternatives**—AG recommends that it would be useful for BGI to talk about what BGI would spend money on if they do not move forward with implementing the Coal Vertical project. Might there be a better use of money? Is there another pilot that might potentially successful? The idea of alternatives is countered by the fact that Coal Vertical is a low-risk investment, as an already successful pilot with industry and citizen support that has already cleared privacy requirements. An alternative that BGI has decided not to support is the truck project.
- **Clear Purpose for $275,000**—AG recommends that BGI clarify what Coal Vertical will be able to do with the $275,000 investment that it is currently unable to do.

Project Direction:
- Governance Board meeting Wednesday, February 9th 1-3 p.m. at the SBA.

Action Items/Next Steps:

Action Item List			
#	Description	Owner	Due Date
1	Sign up for planning meetings to occur on 1/26/05 and 1/27/05	Member agencies	1/24/05
2	Incorporate COMPASS and Coal Vertical	PMO; to be	Prior to

	Project recommendations discussed during today's meeting into the Governance Board presentation	discussed further during 1/26 and 1/27 planning meetings	Governance Board meeting in February